

Health and Human Services Committee
LB 1046
February 8, 2018

Matthew T. Wallen, Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Chairman Riepe, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Matt Wallen (M-A-T-T W-A-L-L-E-N) and I am the Director of the Division of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

I am here to testify in opposition to LB1046, which requires DHHS to develop and implement a corrective action plan to bring caseloads within standards whenever the caseload standards are exceeded for two consecutive quarters and the Governor declares a caseload emergency. This corrective action plan would be submitted within 90 days of the declaration.

I am confident at this time there are enough positions allocated to meet caseload standards for the number of children DHHS is currently serving. However, allocated positions do not equal fully trained team members able to carry full caseloads. For example, there are always members of our team in the hiring process and new worker training or on vacation, maternity or catastrophic leave. Given the situation and any given time, caseloads are adjusted to compensate for these situations. Mandating that an emergency be declared only undermines the hard work our skilled case workers are doing every day. LB 1046 will not solve the problem of assuring positions are filled and sustained long-term.

As you are aware, during committee's caseload/workforce oversight briefing on January 25, 2018, I outlined several initiatives already underway to bring caseloads within standards. These initiatives include the development of tiered CFSS positions, flexible staff hours, staff core hours, use of telecommuting, peer assignments, and use of tablets to complete assignments. I also mentioned that DHHS was selected to participate in the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD) five year workforce project. The goals of this project are to: work with experts on the QIC-WD team regarding some tools, strategies and best practices; increase retention of the CFSS workforce by increased job satisfaction; comply with statutory requirements for caseload standards; and improve outcomes for the children and families we serve.

I am confident we are making improvements and heading in the right direction to impact the caseload standards.

If the committee insist on moving forward with this bill, I would like to request there be an amendment to change Page 2 line 4 by striking SHALL and inserting MAY.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.